

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
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INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
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AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI
USMISSION USUN

C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 5472

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, UR, SY, PLO, EG
SUBJECT: SYRIANS DESCRIBES ASAD VISIT TO MOSCOW

SUMMARY: SYRIAN EMBASSY SOURCE SAYS THAT ASAD VISIT
COMMUNIQUE WILL BE FINISHED IN TIME FOR APRIL 23 PUBLICATION
AND THAT SOVIETS AGREED, AT SYRIAN INSISTENCE, TO PHRASE
"FROM VERY BEGINNING" WITH REGARD TO PLO PARTICIPATION IN
GENEVA CONFERENCE. SECOND STICKING POINT WAS COMMUNIQUE
LANGUAGE ON LEBANON. THIS IS STILL BEING NEGOTIATED, BUT
FINAL FORMULA WILL RESEMBLE - IN Milder FORM - THAT USED
IN RECENT ASAD-CEAUSescu COMMUNIQUE. BILATERAL DISCUSSIONS
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WENT WELL, BUT NEITHER SYRIAN NOR RECENT ARAFAT
INTERCESSIONS ON BEHALF OF EGYPTIANS PRODUCED ANY
NOTABLE SOVIET INTEREST IN MAKING MOVES TO IMPROVE
SOVIET-EGYPTIAN RELATIONS. END SUMMARY.

1. SYRIAN MINISTER-COUNSELOR CHOUERI PROVIDED
APRIL 21 BRIEFING ON ASAD VISIT TO EMBOFFS. AMONG

HIS POINTS WERE FOLLOWING:

-- ASAD IS IN KIEV, WILL SPEND APRIL 22 IN TBILISI AND WILL THEN LEAVE FOR DAMASCUS. SOVIETS DID NOT EXPRESS ANY IRRITATION OVER FON MIN KHADDAM'S MID-VISIT DEPARTURE FOR WASHINGTON. COMMUNIQUE IS "98 PERCENT FINISHED" AND REMAINDER OF ASAD PARTY STILL IN MOSCOW HAS AUTHORITY TO SETTLE REMAINING POINTS WITHOUT FURTHER APPROVAL FROM ASAD. COMMUNIQUE WILL BE PUBLISHED IN APRIL 23 NEWSPAPERS;

-- THERE WERE TWO BASIC STICKING POINTS IN THE COMMUNIQUE: PLO GENEVA PARTICIPATING AND LEBANON. ON FORMER, THE SOVIETS WANTED ONLY THE FORMULA, "ON BASIS OF EQUALITY", BUT SYRIANS WANTED THE PHRASE, "FROM THE BEGINNING", AS WELL. SOVIETS AT FIRST STUBBORNLY REFUSED TO ACCEDE TO SYRIAN INSISTENCE, BUT ASAD PUSHED THIS ISSUE AND PHRASE "FROM BEGINNING" WILL GO INTO COMMUNIQUE. ON LEBANON, SYRIANS WANTED COMMUNIQUE LANGUAGE IDENTICAL TO THAT USED IN LAST SYRIAN-ROMANIAN COMMUNIQUE ON ASAD'S VISIT TO ROMANIA. SOVIETS PREFERRED NO REFERENCE AT ALL BUT WILL LIKELY SETTLE FOR SHORTENED AND SOFTENED VERSION OF LANGUAGE IN SYRIAN-ROMANIAN COMMUNIQUE. THIS FINAL ISSUE IS STILL BEING NEGOTIATED;

-- ON THE TALKS THEMSELVES, WHILE SYRIA PUT FORTH ITS CASE FOR INTERVENTION IN LEBANON VER FORCEFULLY, SOVIETS MERELY LISTENED, NEITHER AGREEING NOR DIS-AGREEING. SYRIANS INTERPRET THIS AS A DESIRE TO AVOID A FRUITLESS ARGUMENT AND THUS PRESERVE THE FAVORABLE

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ATMOSPHERE THE SOVIET HAD ALREADY DECIDED THEY WANTED;

-- THE BILATERAL DISCUSSIONS WENT WELL. THE SYRIANS KEPT THE DISCUSSIONS TO PRINCIPLES AND DETAILS WERE, BY AGREEMENT, LEFT TO THE MIXED COMMISSION. ALL EXISTING CONTRACTS AND AGREEMENTS ARE NOW CONSIDERED TO BE ON COURSE AND NEW POSSIBILITIES WILL BE EXPLORED BY MIXED COMMISSION. THE PROBLEM WHICH SYRIA HAS HAD WITH DELIVERIES OF MILITARY SPARE PARTS HAS BEEN SETTLED;

-- THE TWO SIDES DISCUSSED SOVIET-EGYPTIAN RELATIONS, BUT THE SOVIET SIDE INSISTED THAT THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR IMPROVING RELATIONS RESTED WITH THE EGYPTIANS SINCE THEY WERE THE ONES MAKING THE NEGATIVE SIGNALS. THE SOVIETS DO NOT SEE ANY IMMEDIATE PROSPECTS FOR AN IMPROVEMENT IN THE RELATIONSHIP. ASAD TOLD THE EGYPTIAN AMBASSADOR ONLY THAT THE SITUATION IN THIS REGARD WAS "VERY COMPLICATED AND UNCLEAR."

-- ARAFAT'S REPORTED INTERCESSION WITH THE SOVIETS ON BEHALF OF THE EGYPTIANS DID TAKE PLACE SYRIANS WERE TOLD. HOWEVER, THE SOVIETS SAID THEY TOOK THE SAME POSITION WITH ARAFAT, AS THEY DID WITH SYRIANS, THAT THERE WAS NO NEED FOR AN INTERMEDIARY BETWEEN THEMSELVES AND THE EGYPTIANS;

-- WITH REGARD TO COMPOSITION OF THE DELEGATIONS AT GENEVA, THE SYRIANS WANTED A JOINT ARAB DELEGATION WHILE THE SOVIETS ARGUED THAT IT IS NECESSARY TO BE CAREFUL AND TO CONSIDER THE SPLIT IN THE ARAB WORLD BETWEEN THE PROGRESSIVE FORCES AND THE REACTIONARY OR TRADITIONAL ONES. THUS THE SOVIETS DID NOT COMMIT THEMSELVES TO THE IDEA OF A JOINT ARAB DELEGATION.

2. COMMENT: CHOUERI'S REPORT ON THE ISSUANCE OF THE COMMUNIQUE CONTRASTS WITH PERSISTENT MOSCOW RUMORS (REPEATED, IF NOT INITIATED, BY THE
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EGYPTIANS) THAT SYRIAN-SOVIET DIFFERENCES MIGHT PREVENT AGREEMENT ON A COMMUNIQUE. HIS COMMENTS ON SYRIAN (AND PLO) ATTEMPTS TO MEDIATE SOVIET-EGYPTIAN DIFFERENCES ALSO HAVE SOUND OF AUTHENTICITY TO US. EMBOFF WITNESSED ARGUMENT ON THIS ISSUE APRIL 19 BETWEEN EGYPTIAN POLITICAL COUNSELOR SHEL BAYA AND USA INSTITUTE EXPERT ON U.S./ME POLICY KISLOV. SHEL BAYA ALMOST WISTFULLY PLEADED EFFICACY OF SUCH MEDIATION WHILE KISLOV HARSHLY ARGUED POINT THAT SOVIETS NEEDED NO MEDIATION; THAT ONLY ESSENTIAL CRITERION FOR SOVIET-EGYPTIAN RAPPROACHMENT WAS CESSATION OF SADAT'S ANTI-SOVIET WORDS AND DEEDS. KISLOV EXPRESSED NO OPTIMISM IN THIS REGARD.

3. ARAB DIPLOMATS HERE ARE ATWITTER OVER INCIDENT AT APRIL 20 AIRPORT DEPARTURE CEREMONIES FOR ASAD. BREZHNEV, PRESENTED WITH ARAB CHIEFS OF MISSION ASSEMBLED EN MASSE, OSTENTATIOUSLY SINGLED OUT LIBYAN AMBASSADOR AND TOLD HIM TO PASS HIS GREETINGS TO "COMRADE QADHAFI." OBVIOUS INTERPRETATION IS THAT THIS WAS SOVIET GESTURE OF SUPPORT FOR LIBYANS AT TIME OF RENEWED LIBYAN-EGYPTIAN TENSION.
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